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Phillips, Dave
SOCY.01.2 The Night Watch!
25 years of Peculiar
Service

Former CIA agent kept look-out for 'the lambs'

By MARY BRINKERHOFF

The CIA may not live up to the spirit of 1776, but it isn't strictly from 1984.

Between these chronological and philosophical extremes, Port Worth ex-resident David Attlee Phillips put in 25 years with the Central Intelligence Agency, gathering stories and forming conclusions which he shared with a Dallas audience this week.

While Phillips holds the agency accountable for grave moral sins and errors in judgment, he likes to tell those who would wipe out the CIA a tale about Americans visiting the Moscow zoo.

"This shows you how detente works," the keeper assured them proudly, adding, "Of course, we have to change the lamb every day."

"In the final analysis, someone has to look out for all the lambs," the ex-agent reminded the Mary K. Craig Class Wednesday morning at the Dallas Woman's Club.

Phillips, who retired 16 months ago after service under six presidents, expects to see restrictions on the CIA's "covert action — the big banana peel."

HE TRACES the agency's major blunders to that part of its charter authorizing performance of "such other functions and duties as may be directed from time to time by the National Security Council." He believes "the important thing is to have rules of the game instead of that dangling authority."

But Phillips doesn't feel that Jimmy Carter's election will have any added effect. He remembers the anger of President John F. Kennedy and his brother over the Bay of Pigs fiasco and the way that anger turned to fascination with the CIA.

"History shows that presidents and secretaries of state use the agency, regardless of what they say in the beginning."

Phillips makes no excuses for certain CIA actions, even though he understands the thinking which led to them — and, in some cases, the prodding from superior authority.

These actions included plans for two assassinations, of Fidel Castro in Cuba and of Patrice Lumumba in Africa (neither plan was carried out); dealings with the Mafia, in violation of "the basic tenet that you don't do business with people who might blackmail you"; experimentation with drugs on unknowing victims and a few violations of civil

rights described in the "very thorough" Rockefeller Commission report.

Despite the limits he expects will be set on CIA efforts to influence the affairs of other nations, the Texas-born former agent believes certain functions will remain vital: the gathering of intelligence and the protection of U.S. diplomats and officials traveling abroad, for instance.

He knows he's part of an unpopular minority just now, but this fact hasn't stopped him from writing a book scheduled for publication in February by Atheneum and already named an alternate Book of the Month Club selection.

IT'S TO BE CALLED "The Night Watch: Twenty-five Years of Peculiar Service," the subtitle a reference to espionage borrowed from Nathan Hale, hanged by the British as a spy during the Revolutionary War.

The one-time head of the CIA's Latin-American desk is proud of having been a spook, in agency jargon. "Espionage, illegal in every country, has been practiced since Moses sent men to spy out the Land of Canaan."